

Air meeting focuses on older, dirty diesel trucks

By Barbara Anderson / The Fresno Bee
Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007

VISALIA -- Getting dirty diesel trucks off the roads would go a long way toward cleaning the air in the San Joaquin Valley, air officials said Wednesday at an air pollution symposium here.

But incentives to help owners of heavy-duty trucks install clean-air devices on old trucks or replace aging fleets with new rigs won't be cheap.

The Valley's air district plans to ask for \$100 million out of \$250 million available statewide this year to retrofit and replace older, polluting trucks. The money is part of \$1 billion in clean-air funds from Proposition 1B, approved by voters in November.

The \$100 million "is only a good down payment on what we need to do," said Rick McVaigh, deputy air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Participants at the meeting, which continues today at the Convention Center, were asked to share ideas on ways the Valley can reduce smog to beat a 2024 federal deadline for meeting health standards.

Wednesday's meeting concentrated on diesel trucks and cleaner ways to move goods from sea ports along the California coast. Today's meeting will include discussions on how city and county governments can help clean the air and ways the public can get involved.

Diesel trucks contribute the most to the smog problem in the Valley, and they are a top priority, but there is no silver bullet for cleaning the Valley air, said Seyed Sadredin, air district executive director.

Symposium participant Jim Ganduglia, owner of Ganduglia Trucking of Fresno, said truck owners want to do their part in the air cleanup, but economic as well as environmental costs should be considered.

Ganduglia said a 2004 heavy-duty truck with a clean-air device costs \$63,000 to purchase.

Incentives that help truck owners replace trucks with cleaner-running models are great, he said. "They're just not enough."

But Gloria Arredondo-Malarchick, a registered nurse and member of the Kings County Asthma Coalition, said policymakers and the public also should consider the health toll from breathing polluted air.

"Hopefully, they realize the health costs and look at it as an investment rather than a burden."

Fresh air

Eric Firpo
Tracy Press, Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2007

The Valley air district will meet to figure out ways to improve air quality.

The San Joaquin Valley Air District will host a symposium to talk about how it can improve air quality in the Central Valley.

The district is looking for ways to meet stricter federal and state air quality standards well before the 2024 deadline to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For \$45, attendees will hear about how cities can encourage green building and what incentives the air district offers to commuters and other Central Valley residents to reduce emissions.

Scholarships are available for people who can't afford the fee to attend. The symposium ends with a reception Oct. 4 and a summit sponsored by the California Partnership, a coalition of nonprofits that fights poverty.

At a glance

WHAT: "Taking the Fast Track" air quality symposium

WHEN: noon Oct. 3 to 5 p.m. Oct. 4

WHERE: Visalia Convention Center, 303 E Acequia Ave., in Visalia

COST: \$45

INFO: Anthony Presto, 557-6472 or www.valleyair.org

The road takes a toll on valley drivers' health

Studies find more homes and traffic mean fewer chances for healthy living

By Garth Stapley

Modesto Bee, Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007

The more time people spend behind the wheel, the more likely they are to become stressed, overweight and dead.

But more time in cars is exactly what we can look forward to in the San Joaquin Valley, California's fastest growing region, where road improvements are not keeping pace and where residential planning decisions don't always consider health.

"If you're moving to Modesto, your housing options would be single-family house or single-family house, take your choice," said Christopher Leinberger, a developer, professor and fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. "Your option to buy some bread would be to drive to a strip mall built in the '80s or '90s, take your choice."

A trip like that -- mandatory for most in a car-dependent culture -- requires a lot more time these days than it did, say, 10 years ago. Almost any drive, whether to work or chauffeuring kids to soccer games, takes considerably longer on most valley routes. People change routines to run errands during nonpeak hours, or settle in for longer drives and more headaches.

A decade ago, Dorothy Price would allow about 15 minutes to motor eight miles from her home near Empire to downtown Modesto. These days, she and her husband, Mac, leave 30 minutes early to play cards at the senior center.

"Yosemite Boulevard is just a constant whirl," Dorothy Price said.

And more driving, study after study confirms, means [more pollution](#), more money for gas, less time with family and more chances for crashes.

The number of fatal accidents in Modesto grew from 12 in 2002 to 13 in 2003, 14 in 2004 and 19 in 2005, according to the city's Annual Collision Report, released a year ago. Injury collisions increased from 1,479 in 2004 to 2,053 in 2005, according to the same study.

Leinberger is the latest in a growing cadre of experts to blame at least some health dangers on poor land-use decisions by government officials, namely, city council members and county supervisors. His book, "The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream," due out in two weeks, urges more walkable communities.

'We ... planned it this way'

The problem certainly isn't unique to this area. Analysts for years have pointed to post-World War II national policies that set up history's first generations almost entirely dependent on road travel for many of life's necessities.

"The modern America of obesity, inactivity, depression and loss of community has not 'happened' to us. We legislated, subsidized and planned it this way," according to "Urban Sprawl and Public Health."

The book was co-written by Dr. Richard Jackson, who was California's public health officer when he spoke in Modesto about sprawl woes in 2005.

The valley's evolution as a bedroom community for Bay Area workers made things worse. About 15,000 commuters who found less expensive housing in Stanislaus County drive over the hill to jobs -- up from 1,000 in 1980.

"If the Bay Area had built more compact communities and planned for higher density, (some of) those people would have a 20-minute commute instead of 120 minutes," said Bruce Mast, development director for Build It Green, a Bay Area nonprofit focusing on links between development and health.

Some local growth decisions force people to drive from ever-sprawling suburbs, whether in Riverbank, Ceres or Modesto. Instead of building a high school near 14,000 people in Salida, Modesto City Schools is planning one out in the country -- in the middle of land zoned not for a neighborhood, but an industrial park.

Motorists drive more than 11 million miles in Stanislaus County on any given day, including "trucks blasting through on (Highway) 99 and not stopping," said Lark Downs, senior regional planner with the Stanislaus Council of Governments. His agency predicts the number will balloon by 50 percent in the next couple of decades.

"That's pretty astounding," Downs said.

A valleywide survey in 1999 showed 23 percent of respondents thought traffic was a "big problem." The frustration level more than doubled to 48 percent in a study last year, according to the Great Valley Center and the Public Policy Institute of California.

Across the country, drivers stuck in traffic create a \$78 billion drain on the U.S. economy, wasting 4.2 billion hours and nearly 3 billion gallons of fuel every year, according to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report, released two weeks ago.

"If somebody had said 50 years ago that the result of this policy would be 40,000 (accident) deaths per year and 250,000 serious injuries, I think there might have been cause for concern," Leinberger said.

Driving linked to obesity, bad air

Dr. John Walker, public health officer for Stanislaus County, said he is very concerned about health issues tied to planning decisions.

His outreach program includes "nontraditional public health partners," including government leaders who might plan wisely if they're more aware how their decisions affect public health, Walker said.

Leinberger said obesity and diabetes are natural results of not getting enough exercise -- another unintended consequence of sprawl.

According to 2003 data, the number of overweight and obese teenagers in the valley was 23 percent higher than the statewide rate of 12.4 percent, and the prevalence of obesity in adults 18 to 64 was 14 percent above the state figure of 55.5 percent.

And a study last month by the California Energy Commission linked climate change to planning decisions, for much the same rationale -- forcing people to drive [increases greenhouse gas emissions and pollution](#).

Officials must encourage more plans with homes in walking and bicycling distance of schools, stores and other services, say Jackson, Leinberger and other experts.

Another possibility: more roads. But California increased its state highway lanes only 2 percent in the 1980s and 3 percent in the 1990s; population in the same time frames skyrocketed 26 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

Carol Whiteside, founder of the Great Valley Center and a former Modesto mayor, said the world's most successful cities are congested. The answer, she said, is finding ways other than automobiles to move people, such as more bicycle paths, light rail and buses. The Great Valley Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has studied growth and development issues as well as social and economic challenges facing the region.

"We have to think about giving people choices," Whiteside said, "so they're not in their cars, angry all the time."

E.P.A. Is Petitioned to Limit Ship Emissions

By Felicity Barringer

N.Y. Times, Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 3 — The California attorney general and a coalition of environmental groups have called for federal regulation to curb heat-trapping emissions from the worldwide fleet of about 90,000 oceangoing ships, including container ships, tankers and cruise ships.

The regulations, sought in separate petitions to the Environmental Protection Agency, would apply to United States territorial waters.

Only six countries generate more emissions of greenhouse gases than the world's oceangoing vessels, said Michael Hirshfield, a senior scientist with Oceana, an ocean-protection organization.

The group's petition, whose participants included the Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of the Earth, argues that "the sheer number of these ships, coupled with operating practices that use fuel inefficiently and poor government oversight, results in carbon dioxide emissions" equal to the emissions of 130 million to 195 million cars.

While regulation of ship-generated air pollution and regulation of greenhouse gases have been on California's agenda for years, this is among the first efforts to deal with the two simultaneously.

California air-pollution regulators, both statewide and in the Los Angeles area, have for several years focused on conventional pollutants from ship engines, which contribute 50 percent of the smog-related sulfur dioxide emissions in the greater Los Angeles area, according to Peter Greenwald, a senior policy adviser with the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

But a federal district court judge blocked a recent effort by the state to require ships to use low-sulfur fuel when they come within 24 miles of the California coast. The requirement, the judge said, impermissibly pre-empted the federal Clean Air Act.

In the new petitions, Attorney General Edmund G. Brown and the environmental groups argue that a Supreme Court decision last year opened the door for the E.P.A. to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. They are asking the agency to do the same for emissions from large marine engines. "In terms of the law, E.P.A. can act" in territorial waters, Mr. Brown said.

The idea of unilateral regulation of an international industry drew quick criticism.

Joe Angelo, the deputy managing director of Intertanko, a group representing independent tanker operators, said the best approach was "to reduce emissions worldwide — universally — not just unilateral action in the United States or the European Union."

The environmental groups suggested two ways to cut ship-generated emissions: forcing ships to curb their speed and to change to a higher-grade fuel than the thick "bunker" fuel that is commonly used.

But T. L. Garrett, a vice president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, said greenhouse gases created by distilling the thick bunker fuel into higher grades would probably exceed the amount kept from the atmosphere by reductions in emissions.

Action urged on ship pollution

By Steve Geissinger, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU
Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Attorney General Jerry Brown and national environmental groups demanded on Wednesday that the Bush administration address greenhouse-gas emissions from smoke-belching ships that Brown believes contribute significantly to global warming.

Brown and the environmentalists contend that oceangoing vessels contribute up to 5 percent of the world's greenhouse gases — roughly the same amount as all vehicles driven in the U.S. Ships burn enormous amounts of bunker oil — the dirtiest petroleum product of all — as they crisscross the high seas and make more than 10,000 stops annually at California ports, such as Oakland, Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Brown petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to adopt strict federal government regulations limiting greenhouse gas emissions from container ships, cruise liners, oil tankers and other large vessels that call at American ports. The petition was filed in Washington by Brown's office, supported by Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth, Center for Biological Diversity and Oceana.

The EPA has the authority to curb greenhouse gas emissions, and our petition asks the agency to make specific findings that ships significantly contribute to global warming, Brown said during a teleconference.

The Bush administration, overall, opposes mandatory curbs on greenhouse gas emissions. Brown and other California officials already have been pushing for greater emission controls on vehicles and power plants.

Bush administration officials, including the U.S. EPA, did not immediately respond to Brown.

The Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, which represents 70 companies that own and operate cargo carriers, declined to comment.

In a statement on its Web site, the PMSA says its member companies are already proactively working to reduce emissions by exploring the use of a wide variety of cleaner fuels, engines, and retrofit technologies that exceed any existing requirements.

Environmental groups scoff at the assertion, saying the association is battling government efforts to address emission standards.

Brown acknowledged the difficulty of what he's asking of the Bush administration.

International law governs oceangoing vessels. Virtually all the ships that transport cargo to the United States are registered under foreign flags. United Nations groups have mulled the matter for years but have yet to take action.

Even so, Brown said federal officials could take limited actions.

International legal rights do not include polluting the air or water near our coastal cities, Brown said. If the United States is to do its part in reducing the threat of global climate disruption, the EPA must limit the global warming emission from ships that enter U.S. ports.

State regulators and California port officials are considering rules to require that ships reduce speed as they near the shore, reducing emissions, and plug into electric outlets while they unload, since power can be generated more cleanly ashore.

Proponents of a crackdown on ship emissions said the issue is of prime importance because studies show vessel emissions are expected to increase 75 percent over the next two decades as global trade expands.

California, environmentalists ask EPA to regulate ship emissions

By Terence Chea, Associated Press

In the L.A. Times, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2007

SAN FRANCISCO Environmental groups and California Attorney General Jerry Brown petitioned the federal government Wednesday to regulate on emissions from oceangoing ships that spew heat-trapping gases responsible for global warming.

In separate written requests, they asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to adopt standards for carbon dioxide emissions from the thousands of cargo ships, cruise liners and other large vessels that dock at American ports each year.

Marine vessels are responsible for nearly 3 percent of the world's greenhouse gases - equal to the amount generated by all cars in the U.S. - and ship emissions are projected to grow by more than 70 percent by 2020 as global trade expands, according to the petitions.

"If the U.S. is to do its part in reducing the threat of global climate disruption, then EPA must limit the global warming emissions from ships that enter the ports of the United States," Brown said.

The environmentalists' petition was filed by Oakland-based Earthjustice on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Earth and Oceana.

EPA officials said they would review the requests, which require a response within six months.

While the federal government does not now regulate greenhouse gas emissions from ships, the EPA recently asked the United Nations International Maritime Organization, which regulates the global shipping industry, to set international emissions standards for marine vessels.

"Pollution knows no political or geographical boundaries, and the EPA's current proposal to harmonize emissions standards at ports worldwide would deliver cleaner air to all Americans," said EPA spokeswoman Jessica Emond.

Brown and the environmentalists said the IMO was moving too slowly in setting controls on ship emissions, so the federal government must start regulating vessels that enter U.S. waters.

Shipping industry officials said they support the EPA's proposal.

"We would prefer to see these issues resolved at the international level," said T.L. Garrett, vice president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association. "Then everyone's on a level playing field. We think it's most efficient way of advancing these environmental initiatives."

The petitions follow the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling earlier this year that the EPA has the authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases linked to climate change. In response to that decision, the agency has been working on regulations aimed at reducing emissions from cars and trucks.

Environmentalists said emissions from marine vessels could be greatly reduced if ships switched to cleaner-burning fuels, traveled at slower speeds and plugged into land-based energy sources when docked.

"Shipping pollution has been given a free pass so far, and it's time for the U.S. to be a leader and do something about it," said Oceana scientist Michael Hirshfield.

Calif. pulp mill reaches settlement over pollution allegations

The Associated Press in the Contra Costa Times Wed., Oct. 3, 2007

EUREKA, Calif.-Federal, state and regional air-quality authorities have reached a \$5 million settlement with a pulp mill that they said had repeatedly violated emissions standards.

The settlement with Evergreen Pulp Inc. will reduce particulate matter and other air pollutants by about 340 tons each year, the Environmental Protection Agency, California Air Resources Board, and North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District said.

Of the \$5 million, \$4.1 million will go toward emission control equipment and \$900,000 will go to fines split between the three agencies, officials said.

Pulp mills convert wood chips into a fiberboard which can be shipped to a paper mill for further processing. Evergreen Pulp's mill is in Samoa, Calif., an unincorporated area near Eureka on the peninsula between the Pacific Ocean and Humboldt Bay.

The facility allegedly violated the federal emission standard for hazardous air pollutants by approximately 230 percent, and violated monitoring, reporting, and recordkeeping requirements, the EPA said in its announcement.

The company also allegedly violated state air pollution control laws for nuisance, opacity and air pollution control equipment maintenance requirements.

"Emissions from pulp mills can have a significant impact on air quality in the immediate area around these facilities," said Deborah Jordan, director of the EPA's Air Division for the Pacific Southwest region.

The settlement was filed Tuesday in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California and is subject to a 30-day public comment period.

Lawmakers Will Proceed on Climate Plan Leaders Focus on System of Tradable Allowances for Greenhouse Gas Emissions

By Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post Staff Writer
Washington Post Thursday, October 4, 2007

Legislative leaders in the House and Senate said yesterday that they plan to press ahead with proposals to limit U.S. emissions linked to global warming, focusing on mandatory, economy-wide caps of the kind that President Bush explicitly rejected last week in a climate conference he hosted.

While the bills are less ambitious than many climate scientists and environmental activists have wanted, they indicate that Congress plans to press ahead with a sweeping climate change proposal despite the president's opposition.

Yesterday, Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee issued a white paper outlining a cap-and-trade system that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent to 80 percent below current levels. Under the system envisioned by Chairman John D. Dingell (D-Mich.) and a key subcommittee chairman, Rick Boucher (D-Va.), the federal government would distribute greenhouse gas allowances that could be bought and sold, though the lawmakers left open the possibility of using taxes as well.

It remains unclear how much Republican support Dingell and Boucher's proposal will enjoy in the House, and when legislation might advance. Asked whether GOP members backed the plan, Dingell spokeswoman Jodi Seth responded in an e-mail, "You'll have to check with the Republicans."

Boucher has vowed to work with his GOP counterpart on the subcommittee on energy and air quality, former speaker J. Dennis Hastert (Ill.), but Hastert spokeswoman Lulu Blacksmith said her boss had not taken a position and "is in the process of reviewing the document."

The Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works plans to move a bipartisan bill through committee in December, at a time when international climate negotiators will be meeting in Bali. Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) will lead a Senate delegation to the talks along with John F. Kerry (D-Mass.).

"Moving global warming legislation is a top priority," Boxer said in a statement. "I am optimistic that we can get a strong global warming bill through the subcommittee very soon and through the full committee by the end of the year."

The panel plans to take up a cap-and-trade bill authored by Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) and John W. Warner (R-Va.) that includes a Federal Reserve-style board to help contain the costs imposed on carbon emitters and aims for a 70 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions from current levels by 2050. It also will take up several other climate bills with both deeper and more modest emissions cuts.

Environmental advocacy groups welcomed these overtures. Steve Cochran, national climate campaign director for Environmental Defense said yesterday's white paper "appears to be a serious attempt by Chairmen Dingell and Boucher to take the initial steps toward developing comprehensive climate legislation in the House."

David D. Doniger, policy director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Climate Center, said that while he and other environmentalists back an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gases, Dingell and Boucher's blueprint amounts to "a very constructive opening move."

However, Lee Fuller, vice president of government relations at the Independent Petroleum Association of America, said lawmakers have underestimated the challenge of reaching their reduction targets by assuming that as many as 145 new nuclear power plants will come online by 2030.

"Is that realistic? Our sense is no," Fuller said.

[Orange County Register editorial, Thurs., Oct. 4, 2007:](#)

Most bills unworthy, some worthwhile

Many of the 600-plus bills on the governor's desk are good candidates for a veto; a few should be signed.

Considering the 610 bills approved by the Legislature still awaiting approval or veto by the governor, the wisdom of Marcus Tullius Cicero comes to mind: "More law, less justice."

The 120 members of the Assembly and Senate know how to vote generous gifts from the public treasury to reward favored constituencies, and how to impose preferences of a few to restrict the freedom of many. That's why we urge Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to veto many pending bills, but also find a few worthwhile, principally because they undo damage done by previous legislative meddling.

The leading candidate for veto is Assembly Bill 8, a step toward socialized medicine that would mandate employers spend 7.5 percent of wages on health care, or pay a new tax to subsidize health coverage. The governor has indicated he will veto AB8, but only because he prefers something we believe to be even worse. We'll take his veto and hope something worse doesn't materialize.

Another obnoxious intrusion is Senate Bill 120, which would require restaurant chains to list calorie, fat, carbohydrate and sodium content on menus. The California Restaurant Association rightly objects that implementation of this bill probably is impossible because of customized orders and differing portions. Even if it were possible, it's not the government's job to dictate such stuff. It should be voluntary. What next, taste police?

AB878 would increase the \$1 car tax counties may impose for vehicle abatement and theft deterrence programs, to \$2, a 100 percent increase. The California Taxpayers' Association estimates this new tax could cost Californians up to \$48 million more each year. We concur with

the California Motor Car Dealers Association that there already are too many fees amounting to hidden taxes attached to vehicle registration.

AB1470 would penalize every taxpayer to subsidize a particular industry. The so-called Solar Hot Water and Efficiency Act of 2007 is a \$250 million subsidy to promote installation of solar hot water heaters. The government shouldn't pick winners and losers among alternative-energy providers. That's the free market's role. If solar energy can win customers, fine. But we're opposed to forcing taxpayers to underwrite technology that so far proves uneconomical and unappealing to buyers.

The Nanny State-enhancing SB490 would prohibit food containing artificial trans fats to be sold to students in kindergarten through 12th grade through vending machines or school cafeterias. What children digest is their parents' business, not the government's. The California Chamber of Commerce points out that banning trans fats also may have the unintended consequence of forcing the food industry to return to saturated fat due to a lack of more healthy alternatives.

AB118 would create a host of programs funded with new vehicle and boat registration, smog abatement and other fees to promote alternative fuel and fleet programs. This is one of what promises to be many bills implementing 2006's Global Warming Solutions Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The costs include increasing vehicle registration fees from \$31 to \$34, boat registration fees from \$20 to \$40, and increasing service fees for identification plates from \$15 to \$20 and smog abatement fees from \$12 to \$20. The Global Warming Solutions Act overreached to solve a problem that increasingly looks less threatening, yet will literally tax Californians for years to come. There's no guarantee these costly taxes will decrease greenhouse gas emissions, or that greenhouse gases even pose a dangerous threat.

On the other hand, we find some pending legislation worthy:

SB920 may not go far enough, but goes in the right direction. This bill authorizes the Franchise Tax Board to provide the state controller with information about taxpayers to locate people whose property the state has seized, ostensibly for safe-keeping. This sharing should help private individuals and companies reclaim what's rightfully theirs. It remains to be seen whether this bill will satisfy a federal court that halted the state's seizures until complying with the court's order to notify owners prior to seizing their assets.

We also find AB684 worthwhile in authorizing California farmers to grow industrial hemp. Last year the governor vetoed a similar bill. But this year's version addressed law enforcement concerns. Hemp grown for industrial purposes is different than cannabis grown for its significant amount of THC and other intoxicants.

Finally, AB1559 seems a common-sense approach to higher education by allowing community colleges to establish merit-based admission systems for associate-degree nursing programs. One shudders to think on what basis aspiring nurses were admitted previously, if not on merit.

[Letter to the Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007](#)

Racetrack a boondoggle

In following the RMP issue, as a member of the community, I feel compelled to respond to Mark Melville's letter of Sept. 19. My interpretation of ongoing matters between the Planning Department and RMP follows along these lines: Who does RMP think they are kidding? Does RMP actually believe they can continue to pull the wool over the eyes of Merced? When an individual or business doesn't pay their bills in a timely manner, the likes of Pacific Gas and Electric cuts off service and so does water, sewer and garbage, as well as insurance carriers for non-payment and mortgage companies begin default and foreclosure proceedings.

It has become more than apparent your business dealings in Merced and Alameda counties are not in keeping with normally accepted business practices.

When you owe the Planning Department money in essence you owe each and every individual taxpayer in the county money. Mr. Melville, the county and city of Merced are made up of taxpayers who pay taxes, which in turn pays every government employee. Ultimately, the money to support the city and county comes from the people. Further, do you really think we believe it has taken six months to ask the Planning Department about the correctness of the bill?

I had a personal sit down at my place of business with Mark Melville. It was at the insistence of Bob Acheson, who coincidentally is running for a seat on the Merced City Council. While quizzing Acheson about issues of potential noise and air pollution, traffic jams, road construction, maintenance matters and wages surrounding RMP, it quickly became apparent he had not much knowledge and no solid answers. Instead he declared he personally knows Melville and he has his word that all these issues would be taken care of and also has Melville's word that all the monetary backing is in place.

Must I point out this is the very same Melville who is attempting to lull us into thinking that relations between the Planning Department and RMP are not strained? In my humble experience, any time one owes someone else money that is long past due has a strained situation.

Melville told me that the race cars do not put off pollution, that an extra 50,000 cars and trucks streaming into and out of the raceway gates and onto county and state roads would not create any additional danger to drivers on the highways, will not create additional pollution and further told me RMP doesn't have to do anything to protect me from air or noise pollution because they already have the approval of the Board of Supervisors. To satisfy Foster Farms, Melville stated they have agreed to build a higher fence to protect the chickens. And for the prison they will install a speaker system capable of being heard over the roar of cars by prisoners when they are in the yard.

The county and city of Merced leaders will be better served by seeking job opportunities for the community that pay above minimum wage and provide health benefits.

Susan Stamenson, Merced

[Letters to the L.A. Times, Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007:](#)

Bill focuses on clean air

While The Times is right in supporting SB 210, it misses the mark on AB 118, a bill driven by the crisis of air pollution plaguing California that deserves the governor's support. If signed by the governor, it would annually generate \$125 million for research, development and deployment of an alternative fuel infrastructure and vehicles; and \$80 million for air quality programs to address air pollution challenges in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

Dismal air quality in such areas as L.A. and Riverside is literally killing thousands of Californians. AB 118 would provide funding for research to evaluate the air quality effect of alternative fuels and establish clear guidelines that help ensure these alternatives don't inadvertently increase air pollutants. Shifting to cleaner cars and fuels is a critical part of California's strategy to reduce global warming and protect public health. AB 118 will help make this shift.

Tim Carmichael, Los Angeles

The writer is senior director of policy of the Coalition for Clean Air.

Your editorial wrongly rejects AB 118's practical approach to advancing alternative fuels and reducing petroleum dependence. Under California's landmark Global Warming Solutions Act, the state Air Resources Board is establishing a low carbon fuel standard to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 10%. To achieve this, the board estimates we need to replace 20% of gasoline consumption with lower-carbon fuels and increase the state's number of alternative-fuel or hybrid vehicles by more than 7 million. AB 118 funds incentives for more alternative fuels and helps make clean-car technologies affordable for more Californians. With these funds, California drivers will have incentives to retire their old, gas-burning, carbon dioxide-emitting cars. That means fewer children in the L.A. Basin and other communities will have to start their days by taking a hit from asthma inhalers. The governor should sign AB 118.

Fabian Nuñez, *Speaker of the Assembly*

Sacramento

Drive-by biodiesel plan

I was inspired by your Column One and cannot help but think of the possibilities for biodiesel fuel in Los Angeles. In fact, we have a ready-made situation that eases the distribution problem immensely. We have an area that is currently choked with diesel exhaust created by large truck engines -- the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports. What if some of our "left-leaning Hollywood types" got together with our port authorities and maybe even local governments (at the risk of delaying the schedule by years) to establish a biodiesel production facility close to the ports? Biodiesel delivery trucks could go right to the trucks waiting in line for their cargo and top them off. Using Rob Del Bueno's enterprise as an example, it seems this could be implemented much faster and potentially cheaper than replacing all of the cargo trucks with clean diesel engines.

Kirk Moody, *Manhattan Beach*